

INFORMATION AND STUDIES ON EDUCATION AS AN OBJECT OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION (II): COOPERATION IN EUROPE THROUGH THE EURYDICE NETWORK AS A MODEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIONS THROUGH THE SPANISH NETWORK REDIE.

INFORMACIÓN Y ESTUDIOS SOBRE EDUCACIÓN COMO OBJETO DE COOPERACIÓN TERRITORIAL (II): LA COOPERACIÓN EN EUROPA A TRAVÉS DE LA RED EURYDICE COMO MODELO DE COOPERACIÓN ENTRE LAS ADMINISTRACIONES EDUCATIVAS A TRAVÉS DE LA RED ESPAÑOLA REDIE.

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ABSTRACT

On the occasion of the European double anniversary which JOSPOE is currently celebrating, the Eurydice Spanish Unit (Eurydice Spain-REDIE) has wished to accept the invitation to participate in this extraordinary issue alongside the Eurydice European Unit, the European Commission's information network coordinator on education. The reason is, none other than, the good model of cooperation it offers Spain when it comes to reporting on education management. The first article has been prepared by the heads of both units, describing the trajectory of the European and Spanish information networks on education, evolving into what they are today; the second article has been written by analysts of the European unit and specialists and external experts of the Spanish unit, and presents the work they carry out, in order to fulfil the commitments undertaken through the annual work plans.

Key words: European strategies, education and training, European cooperation, territorial cooperation, Autonomous Communities, educational information, studies on education, education systems, autonomic descriptors.

SUMMARY

Con motivo de la doble efeméride europea que celebra JOSPOE, la Unidad española de Eurydice (Eurydice España-REDIE) ha querido responder a la invitación a participar en este número extraordinario de la mano de la Unidad europea, coordinadora de la Red de información sobre educación de la Comisión Europea. La razón no es otra que el buen modelo de cooperación que ofrece a España a la hora de informar sobre la gestión de la educación. El primer artículo está elaborado por los responsables de ambas Unidades y describe la trayectoria de las redes europea y española de información sobre educación hasta convertirse en lo que son hoy en día; este segundo está redactado por los analistas de la Unidad europea y los técnicos y expertos externos de la Unidad española, y presenta el trabajo que realizan con el fin de dar cumplimiento a los compromisos adquiridos a través de los planes de trabajo anuales.

Palabras clave: estrategias europeas, educación y formación, cooperación europea, cooperación territorial, Comunidades Autónomas, información educativa, estudios sobre educación, sistemas educativos, descriptores autonómicos.

Both articles are dedicated to Mercedes Muñoz-Repiso Izaguirre, who was the first head of the Eurydice Spanish Unit, and to the technical experts of educational administrations and external experts who have, from the past to the present, converted it into Eurydice Spain-REDIE

INTRODUCTION

“The central role of Eurydice is to support European cooperation on education by providing evidence, that is to say, ‘provide to those responsible for educational systems and policies, analysis and information at a European level that gives them advice and guides them in their decision-making’.

[...] The role of the National Units is to provide the Eurydice European Unit with information and data on their respective education systems. Their funding through an annual call, serves to support the implementation of activities scheduled in the annual work programmes, and the promotion, translation and dissemination of the ‘Eurydice products’ at national level.

The Eurydice Network provides a vast source of comparable information on European education systems and policies, and existing comparative analysis on different subjects. The information provided by the Eurydice National Units is essentially normative and qualitative, deriving from official documents (laws, decrees, regulations and guidelines). The Eurydice European Unit combines the mentioned information with other data sources, such as statistical data from Eurostat or the UOE database (UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat Joint Database)”

(Education Work Programme 2017-18 for EACEA A7 and the Eurydice Network., p. 5)

In this second article, analysts from the Eurydice European Unit present and describe their organisation, actions carried out and their work methodology, designed to comply with the annual plans established by the European information network on education.

Technical and external experts from the Eurydice Spain-REDIE also take the floor and reflect upon actions carried out to date, with a view to replicating the European methodology at a national level. The 30-year-old European experience of the Spanish Unit, is proving to be very valuable when articulating territorial cooperation between education administrations, necessary for understanding the Spanish education management.

1. MILESTONES THAT ACCOUNT FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE EUROPEAN COOPERATION MODEL BY THE SPANISH EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIONS IN ORDER TO REPORT ON EDUCATION

“...it can be claimed, based on the experience of the usefulness of Eurydice for government decision-making and for acquiring greater knowledge on education in general, that the creation of such a network as a mechanism of territorial cooperation, serving State education administrations, contributes to the momentum of the said cooperation as well as the improvement of quality education. It also

serves as an appropriate channel for undertaking international commitments, providing information on the Spanish education system” (Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2010-2011. Conference on Education, 28 September 2010. Programme number 15. Spanish Information Network on Education, p. 103)

Two of the milestones described in the first section of the article, of this same issue, “Information and studies on education as an object of territorial cooperation I”, determined that the evolution of the Eurydice Spanish Unit to Eurydice Spain-REDIE, was as following:

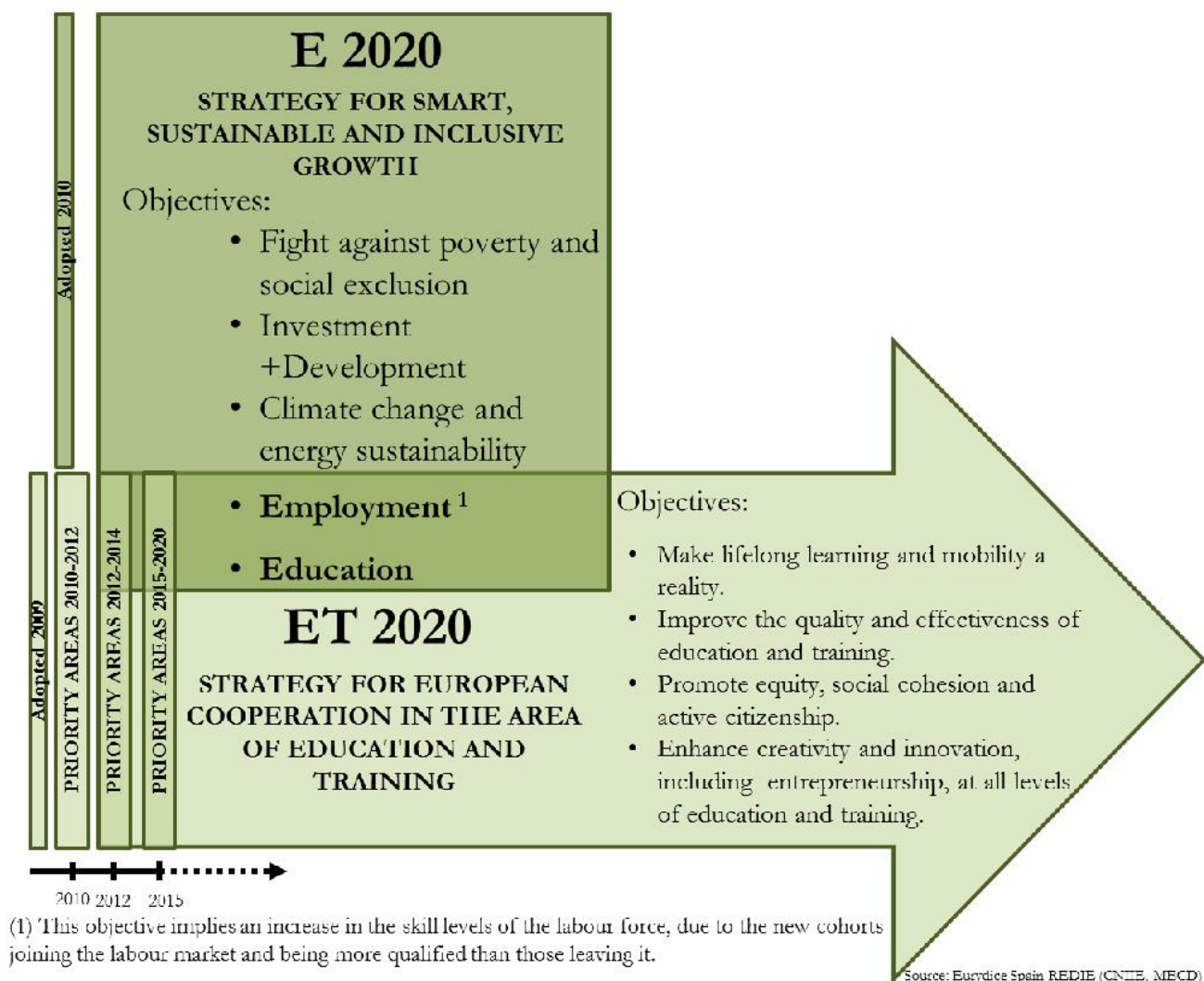
- In 1990 the Eurydice Network was assigned to “facilitate the development of **comparative analysis, reports and synthesis on common priority issues**” by the Council and Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council (DOUE 31-12-1990, N°C 329/23). Eurydice therefore develops its own methodology of compared analysis through the publication of thematic studies and the first *Community education indicators*
- In the year 2000, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is introduced into the field of education and in 2006, the **European cooperation** was promoted by the European Parliament and the Council to “enhance the quality and transparency of Member States’ education and training systems” through “ensuring an adequate supply of comparable data, statistics and analysis to underpin lifelong learning policy development, as well as monitoring progress towards objectives and targets in lifelong learning and identifying areas that need particular attention” (DOUE 24-11-2006, L 327/60).

Living *at first hand* the evolution of the European Network chartered the course at national level. Thus, the creation of REDIE in 2010, the Spanish Information Network on education, transformed the Eurydice Spanish Unit into Eurydice Spain-REDIE.

The political and institutional context in which the Eurydice Network operates, also changed significantly, at both Commission and Member States level. Within this, there are two key moments that gave rise to new activities and new “Eurydice products”, to which the National Units contribute:

- 1992, the formal recognition of education as a European Union area of competency
- from 2009, the Eurydice Network receives the mission to support policy and decision making processes at national and European level and, in particular, work carried out by the Commission and the Member States within the context of the ‘New Strategic Framework in Education and Training until 2020’ (ET2020, 2009) and the ‘Europe Strategy 2020’ (E2020, 2010).

Diagram 1: European strategies, pillars for education policy of the EU and the Member States

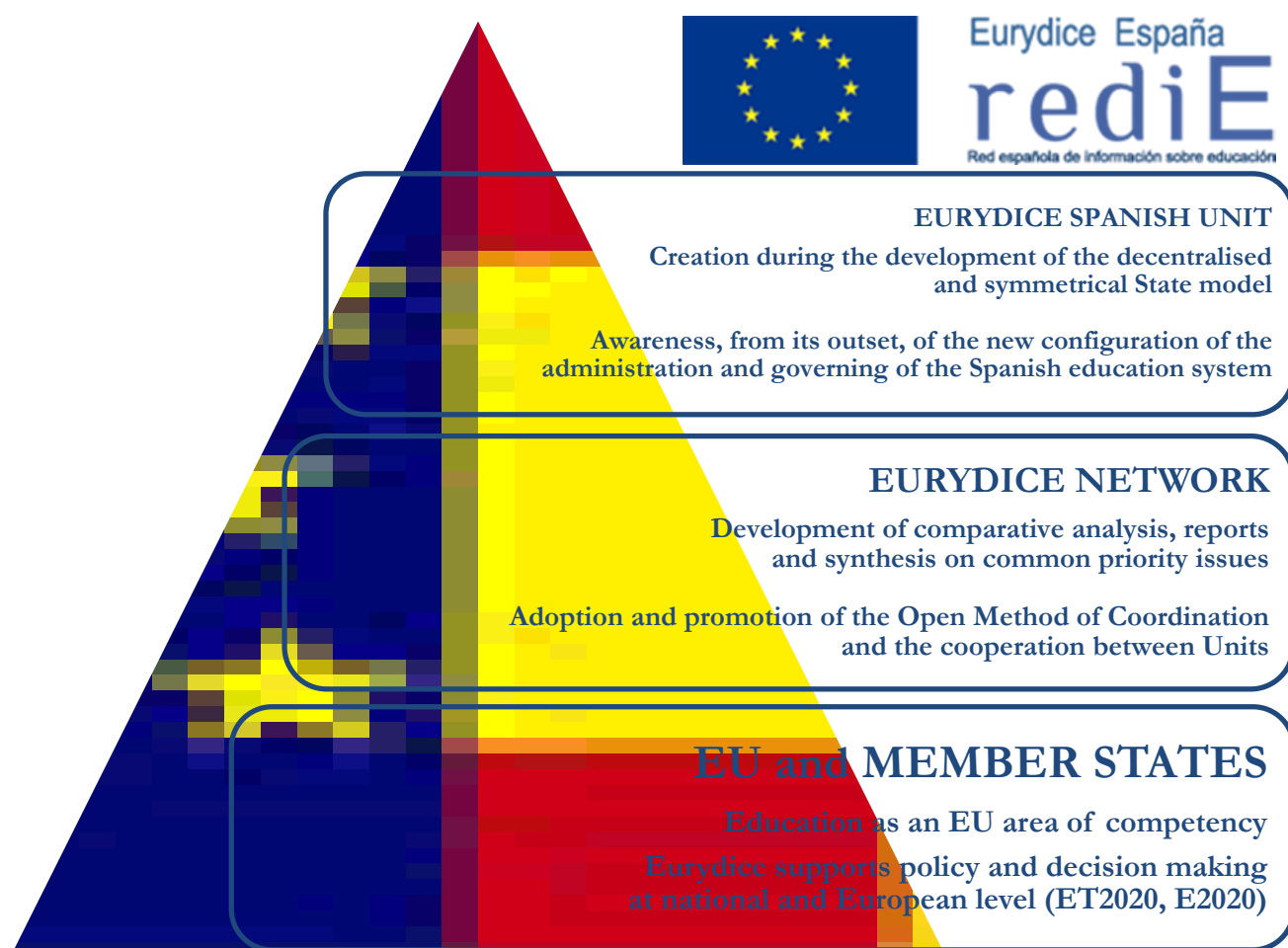


More information: European priorities in the field of education and training (Eurydice Spain-REDIE web portal). Retrieved from <http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/mc/redie-eurydice/prioridades-europeas.html>

To conclude, the Eurydice Spanish Unit was located within the Ministry of Education at a moment in which the decentralised and symmetrical State model, established by the Spanish Constitution, was under full development.

For this reason, as stated in the second section of the previous article, since its creation it has been aware of the administration and governing of the evolving Spanish education system, until the process of educational transfers to the Autonomous Communities in 2000 was finalised.

Diagram 2: The three contexts which lead to the transforming of the Eurydice Spanish Unit into Eurydice Spain-REDIE and to the adopting of the European cooperation model to carry out its work in the European and Spanish information Networks on education.



Source: Prepared by Eurydice Spain-REDIE

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EURYDICE NETWORK'S ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME. THE DECISIONS IN EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE ON ITS ANNUAL ACTIVITIES

The **Eurydice Network's** annual work programme is always guided by the political priorities of the European Commission:

“For the major European policy initiatives, the availability of qualitative, official and specific information is essential. The work programme intends to fulfil objectives and challenges linked to these processes (Europe 2020 Strategy, Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020), the Bologna Process, the Paris Declaration, Council Conclusions on the development of media literacy and critical thinking and the Agenda for New Skills). Therefore:

- the European Network must provide information which allows the analysis of the participating countries' reforms and trends, and the monitoring of specific recommendations adopted during the European semester of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The overall objective is to assist the Commission in its decision making, providing specific information to enable the assessment of the effects of reforms and initiatives. The collection of qualitative information not only allows its exchange but also its innovative approaches, and underpin peer learning activities
- Eurydice also develops thematic analyses to support the work carried out by the Commission and Member States. The analyses are conducted on large areas which are based on priorities established by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- both studies on the implementation of the Bologna Process and the thematic analyses, analyse key qualitative and quantitative indicators to take stock of certain specific issues
- National Factsheets and monographic Databases (*Facts and Figures*) provide very clear and comparable national information on the pre-defined specific issues
- the Eurydice Network reinforces its supporting role towards the national authorities and continues efforts to promote its products.

(Education Work Programme 2017-18 for EACEA A7 and the Eurydice Network., pp. 5 y 6)

Not only does the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture collaborate in its development (enquiry in March-April of last year). Also the National Units, to strengthen their ownership, disclose their opinions on ongoing activities and propose ideas for new tasks in a consultation stage within the Eurydice Network itself (April of last year). Furthermore, prior to their submission to the Erasmus+ Programme Committee, the provisional agenda was jointly closed in the Annual Eurydice Heads of Unit meeting, (September of last year).

“A7¹ participates in discussions and in the preparation of the working programme in different ways. Firstly, it informs the Directorate General of the number of potential new activities and the approximate starting dates for the following years, depending on the production time of the reports in progress. For example, when the study on citizenship education is finished, we can begin with the study on early childhood education and care. Secondly, during the written consultation in the network and the internal consultation in the Agency, my colleagues can put forward proposals. For instance, the study on emigrants which starts in May, was a National Units' proposal supported by the A7” (Eurydice European Unit Analyst)

In reference to the National Units' meeting held at the Eurydice European Unit's headquarters, last December 2016:

“The distribution of all National Units in working groups to discuss the contents of the first draft, allowed us to give A7 our point of view on whether it would be possible for us to find the required information or what would be the most effective

¹EACEA – A7: Agencia Ejecutiva en el Ámbito Educativo, Audiovisual y Cultural – Unidad A7: Unidad de Análisis de Políticas de Educación y Juventud

methods to request it. I had the impression that our opinion would be useful and, even though final decisions don't depend on us, we were able to contribute in a way, to defining the meaning of the Data Collection" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

"This is an excellent opportunity for highlighting education priority areas in our country, as well as being able to make proposals and recommendations related to the said areas" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

"A work meeting held in Brussels is optimised. There are small work groups, pooling, presentations of different types of information by various rapporteurs ... It's remarkable how everything (contents, organisation, documentation, logistics) is measured to the millimetre, and I get the impression that behind the whole structure there are great professionals with long-term experience" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

As the European cooperation model and the organisation and work methodology of the Eurydice Network is a benchmark when it comes to reporting on education in Spain, the **Eurydice Spain-REDIE's** work programme is linked to:

- the European Network's annual work programme
- the attention to the objectives pursued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) and the National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research (CNIIE), in which it is located
- the relevant agreements adopted in the Working Group of Educational Evaluation and Information (GTEIE), in which it participates, (more information in the previous article, of this same issue, "Information and studies on education as an object of territorial cooperation I").

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"In 2015 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) presented its proposal for the *White Paper on the non-university teaching role*. At this time, the Eurydice Network had just published *The teaching profession in Europe. Practices, perceptions and policies*, update and supplement of *Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe* published in 2013. The participation of Eurydice Spain-REDIE in European studies and the initiatives of the MECD, led to the Directorate-General for Territorial Evaluation and Cooperation of the MECD deciding to produce and publish the new study REDIE, in 2018, *Description of the teaching profession in Infant and Primary School Education in Spain*, in collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM)" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

2.1. ANALYSTS FROM THE EDUCATION AND YOUTH POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT (UNIT A7 – EURYDICE), TECHNICAL AND EXTERNAL EXPERTS FROM EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE

The Eurydice European and Spanish Units consist of analysts and technical experts who develop their annual work programmes.

The **Eurydice Network** analysts have higher qualifications in the field of social sciences (education, sociology, politics, economics...), they master three languages, manage the necessary

IT tools and have excellent public speaking skills, as well as leadership in working teams. To keep up-to-date, they participate in the relevant training courses organised by the European Commission.

Given their high qualifications, as well as acting as leads for the preparation of studies currently underway, they conduct reviews on scientific literature, monitor conferences related to topics and priorities of the European Agenda, and they actively participate in the thematic working groups and peer learning activities organised by the European Commission.

“The Eurydice Network is capable of responding promptly to immediate political priorities. For instance, the booklet published in March 2016 in which a brief overview is provided of the policies adopted by Member States with regard to the objectives of the Paris Declaration (March 2015). This Declaration was adopted by the EU Ministers of Education and Commissioner Navracsics concerning extreme violence and the terrorist attacks occurring in Europe, which constitute a threat to the security of European citizens and their fundamental values of freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the principle of legality, human rights and dignity (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

“The analysts contribute to the promotion of Eurydice, developing articles, such as *Focus on*, which are published on-line and which cover a range of issues related to our studies” (Eurydice European Unit Analyst)

Moreover, they offer their support to the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture in:

- Management meetings
- assessment studies, in the area of their expertise
- meetings of the Standing Group on Indicators organised by the Commission
- response to issues submitted by the European Commission and to their urgent information requirements.

Eurydice Spain-REDIE’s technical experts are education officers who have a temporary or permanent post in the CNIIE and who have been assigned to Project 4: Research and Studies. The language required, in addition to Castilian Spanish, is English, since communications with the European Unit are carried out in this language. They also have sound knowledge on all IT tools needed to work on this Project, be it in the European or the Spanish Network.

The Eurydice Spain-REDIE’s technical experts are not limited only to the implementation of the annual work programme of the Eurydice Network, they also coordinate and perform the programmed activities within REDIE and respond to any requests coming from the GTEIE², of the CNIIE Directorate or the Directorate-General for Territorial Evaluation and Cooperation, to which they belong.

Eurydice Spain-REDIE relies on external experts to implement the Eurydice Network’s annual work programme. The external expert network is funded by an annual grant from the European

² Grupo de Trabajo de Evaluación e Información Educativa

Union, to which the Unit is accountable on a yearly basis. A group of collaborators is established every year, after the annual work programme of the European Network is planned.

“Based on our knowledge on the education system of our country, which is the main tool that enables us to carry out this job” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“My educational profile is that of a very academic nature (Master’s degree, PhD...), therefore, issues related to research, analysis and production of information are very familiar to me. Furthermore, having been trained at that time, in the Eurydice Spanish Unit, through a fellowship awarded to me by the Ministry of Education, I gained first hand knowledge on how work is performed within the Unit, dealing with all types of processes and products [...], and that has been a valuable experience for developing my profile as an expert” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

2.2. COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER UNITS AND OFFICIAL ORGANISATIONS

The Eurydice European and Spanish Units cooperate with other Units and national, European and international organisations.

The **Eurydice Network** draws up reports together with the Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Communities) and the Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), as a result of an ever-closer association between education and training.

“Eurydice has developed, in collaboration with the Cedefop, the first higher education Mobility Scoreboard, in the area of education and initial and vocational education and training, published in December 2016. This common online platform consists of dynamic maps which, at first view, enables an understanding of the regulatory environment of learning mobility in Europe” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

The collaboration between Eurydice and the OECD (NESLI Network) is intended to promote effective data-collection instruments and avoid the duplication of work.

“Proceeding in this way, assures the coherent use of methodology and definitions during data collection. So far, two combined data collections have been carried out for the databases, *Instruction time during compulsory education*, in 2014, and *Teachers and school heads’ salaries and allowances*, which will be published in 2018” (Eurydice European Unit analyst).

It also cooperates with the European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education and with the CRELL (Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning), collaborating with the latter in the field of indicators. And to conclude, it supports the Commission's own collaborations (European Council, UNESCO).

Eurydice Spain-REDIE has particularly benefitted from these types of collaborations, since they have contributed to consolidating even more its long and fruitful relationship with the National Institute for Education Assessment, belonging to the same Directorate-General, and with the Sub-directorate for Statistics and Studies.

Eurydice Spain-REDIE, on its part, has established other relationships within the MECD to comply with the European Network's annual plan, as well as with tasks assigned by those in charge. Since 2015, the Spanish Unit has worked on various occasions, and will continue to do so in the future, with:

- Cabinet State Secretary for Education, Vocational Training and Universities
- Sub-directorate General for University Coordination and Monitoring
- Sub-directorate General for Personnel
- Sub-directorate General for Guidance, Vocational Training and Dual Vocational Training
- Sub-directorate General for Academic Organisation.

And outside the MECD, with the State Foundation for On-the-job Training (Fundae) -ReferNet Spain-.

In 2016, a series of collaborations with the university world have begun:

- the Research Group on Supranational Education Policies (GIPES), of the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM), is working as an external expert on the development of the Spanish contribution to one of the Eurydice studies
- the Measurement and Assessment of Educational Systems Research Group (MESE) of the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and the Camilo José Cela University are both currently preparing REDIE studies, which will be published in 2018.

They are all located within the collaboration framework of the GTEIE³ between the Spanish Unit and the education administrations of the Autonomous Communities.

3. ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS BY THE EURYDICE NETWORK. THE EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE CONTRIBUTION AND REDIE'S OWN ACTIONS

3.1. COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW AND DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: COUNTRIES – DESCRIPTION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS EURYDICE NETWORK

“The use and importance of the national descriptions of European Education Systems has increased in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the ET2020 Strategic Framework. Chapter 14, ‘Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives’ is constantly updated, at least three times a year, in accordance with the European Semester timetable. The aim is to ensure that the national descriptions are of the highest quality and are updated, in order to support the E2020 and ET2020 strategies.

Furthermore, the National Units update all national descriptions at least once a year, based on the Content Guide that has been previously reviewed and the feedback given by the external experts that have evaluated the description.

The assessment of the quality of national descriptions was the subject of a work meeting in 2016, in which the updating of chapter 14 was discussed and the contents

³ Working Group for Educational Assessment and Information

of the first article ‘Comprehensive Overview’ were reviewed. The units were then informed on how to write on a webpage for e-consultation and an exercise on peer review was carried out”

(Education Work Programme 2017-18 for EACEA A7 and the Eurydice Network., p. 7)

Initially, information provided for the descriptions was purely documentary, without carrying out comparisons between education systems of the Member States. From the 1990s onwards, the comparative approach was introduced in response to the requirements of the new European Cooperation that was underway.

The national descriptions are based on a common content Guide which has been developed in cooperation with the National Network Units.

“The content Guide establishes the minimum amount of information that the articles and chapters of the national descriptions should contain, ensuring the comparability between countries” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

Together with the description at all educational levels, from early childhood education and care, to adult education and training, the chapters address different issues of general character: the country’s political, social and economic context, organisation and administration of the education system, funding, teaching staff, management staff and other school staff, quality evaluation, educational support and guidance, mobility and internationalisation, and reforms underway and policy initiatives.

“We believe that the contents of the descriptions cover all the important elements. Nevertheless, the content Guide is adapted, on a yearly basis, to the needs that may arise and is related to the results of the Eurydice’s most recent comparative studies” (Eurydice European Unit Analyst)

Currently, the Eurydice Network is facing a new technological challenge, changing the national descriptions from the collaborative platform MediaWiki to Drupal, which are both content management systems.

Since 2013, the national descriptions have been evaluated by national experts. The objective being, the quality of the national information supplied and incomparable elements included. In 2016, the National Units requested an assessment of more comparative character, that is to say, experts would be able to evaluate one chapter in different countries and then guide them in terms of improving comparability. Although this progress will not be implemented until 2018 onwards, when the entire contents have been transferred to the new computer system, in 2017, this was included in the “Comprehensive Overview” article, regarding national descriptions, after being modified by the Units according to the new content guide.

“A greater harmonisation would be expected when presenting information in the articles and chapters of the national descriptions. Although the Contents Guide exists, the manner in which the information is structured isn’t completely homogeneous among countries” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

THE EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE CONTRIBUTION WITH THE *ONLINE* DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

“External experts from Eurydice Spain-REDIE revise every single article sent to them, checking that they comply with the minimum content” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

When the Spanish Unit begins the annual update of its description of the education system, “there is a first phase in the preparation. Within this the external expert, and by his or her request, the Unit, carries out a review of the Contents Guide and, according to the results, establishes the major aspects to be addressed, attending, in any case, to those contents considered to be obligatory. Once the general directions have been established, which must include the articles and chapters, a revision is carried out concerning what the real possibilities are of finding the mentioned information, then the sources that do contain it are chosen” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“The main information sources for the processing of the current updating of contents are:

- Legislation regulating the education in Spain, at both state and Autonomous Community level
- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport itself and its Sub-directorate General for Statistics and Studies
- The Autonomous Community education administrations
- Reports conducted by other ministerial units and supranational organisations.

Work organisation depends, to a great extent, on the possibility of obtaining updated data, preparing at a later stage those articles or chapters whose updating of data has been delayed.

Once it has been established what type of information is susceptible of being obtained and the sources have been selected, we proceed with the preparation of a draft with the data, which is submitted to Eurydice Spain-REDIE for the exchanging of opinions and for its revision. At this stage, the information to be included in each of the articles and chapters is decided.

In the case of Spain, there are certain aspects which are difficult to present in the articles and chapters of our national description, due to the education decentralisation. It is complicated to explain the singularity it entails:

- there are certain areas to which the State establishes a minimum, which is later developed by the Autonomous Communities: curriculum, student admission and school calendars. In such cases, it's possible to provide State information, based on this minimum
- other areas exist where the competence lies with the Autonomous Communities, such as, text books or education system assessments, so it is highly complex to provide the related information in a comprehensive manner
- there are particular characteristics of the education system, that can vary widely from one Autonomous Community to another. Such is the case, for example, in the

distribution of private state-assisted centres, whose proportion is significantly different depending on the Autonomous Community. Also with respect to geographical accessibility, the geographical factor which can impede access to education is a particularity managed differently among the regions”. (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“In the case of Spain, the arts, sports and languages education, (commonly known as special learning plans), is a particular feature of its education and training system. The reason why they haven’t been included in our national description, until now, is because of the great complexity of dealing with the information involved. The Contents Guide and the technical means provided by Eurydice, are in conformity with the general education system common to every country.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert).

The recent collaboration established between Eurydice Spain-REDIE and the Sub-directorate General for Academic Planning of the MECD is geared towards resolving this situation.

3.1.1. COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW AND DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE SPANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM: REDIPEDIA – THE SPANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM’S ONLINE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE

Redipedia was created in 2015. With this, State information which is offered in the description of the Spanish education system is completed with the description of different specific aspects, based on the management of the regional education administrations’ competencies.

Through the different autonomic descriptors, the mentioned aspects in each of the education administrations can be found, providing an overall view of the entire State and of the similarities and particularities which exist between them. In addition to the description, access is given to the regional legislative references used in its implementation.

“We have selected the contents of the national description of the Spanish education system for Eurydice which would benefit from receiving a regional description. This is due to the great diversity that exists in some topics such as mobility grants, for example, since every Autonomous Community has an endowment, duration and different requirements” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

Diagram 3: An example of the link between the contents of a national description of the Spanish education system of Eurydice and an autonomic descriptor in the Redipedia of Eurydice Spain-REDIE



Fuente: Elaboración Eurydice España-REDIE

More information: “Creation of Redipedia, the online Encyclopaedia of the Spanish education system” and “The publication of the first phase of Redipedia, the online Encyclopaedia of the Spanish education system” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE web portal). Retrieved from <http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/mc/redie-eurydice/inicio.html> (news section)

“I believe that one of the most important roles of the analyst who writes an *autonomic descriptor* is making the text accessible to all readers. Because of our broad expertise on legislation and educational terminology, sometimes it strikes us or we consider important issues that can be too dense or detailed for the general public. Our task is to convey all the information that is available to us, in such a way as to be comprehensible, as well as attractive to the extent possible. This often entails the production of original tables, graphs and figures that transmit a large volume of information within a limited space and in a clear way, which requires well-thought-out planning on how to proceed” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“In the Redipedia articles, I try to keep the mentions to the Autonomous Communities balanced, but always basing them on the relevance of the contributions to the subject being addressed. In other words, if there are 9 Autonomous Communities addressing a subject, they can all be equally described in

the same article, unless one of them has a particularly high number of measures, or particularly innovative projects, or whatever outstanding element that could be interesting in terms of education policy; in that case, balance isn't a priority, but to disclose relevant projects and practices carried out by the regional education administrations" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external)

3.2. THEMATIC STUDIES, COUNTRY FICHES (MONOGRAPHIC DATABASES, FACTS AND FIGURES, AND ANNUAL UPDATES) AND STRUCTURAL INDICATORS (MONITORING SYSTEM OF THE PRIORITIES OF EUROPE 2020)



“All **thematic studies** underway which will be completed in 2017-18, or the new ones that begin, are aligned with the priority themes of the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) or the Europa 2020 Strategy (E2020)”

“The working programme includes annual updates of the **monographic databases**. The main **country fiches** that support work related to the European Semester and analysis of countries of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture are: national school fee systems and support mechanisms for students in higher education, and teachers and head teachers' salaries and allowances. Furthermore, there are four additional country fiches that provide information on organisational aspects of the education systems, such as instruction time in full-time compulsory education or the organisation of the school and academic year”

“In 2015-16, the A7 developed, guided by the priorities identified by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, a qualitative information system to support analysis conducted by the Education and Training Monitor: a set of **key structural indicators** identified in preschool education, basic competencies, early school leaving in the area of education and vocational training, employability, higher education and mobility. In 2017, its annual update will only include synthesis tables and descriptions of reforms and recent changes, which will be used in the ET Monitor”.

(Education Work Programme 2017-18 for EACEA A7 and the Eurydice Network., pp. 7 y 11)

Thematic studies, country fiches and databases, and the Eurydice structural indicators are different products, but their elaboration follows very similar processes. For this reason they are described together, although it will be indicated where relevant, which are the specific phases of the former ones.

While the thematic studies can be completely new or updates of previous issues, the fiches and databases and the structural indicators are annual updates. In some cases, the new product

happens to be the resulting final publication, and not the object of study or the process of elaboration (structural indicators).

A Eurydice thematic study requires a preparation time of between one year and 18 months, which means undergoing up to 6 phases of production:

A) SCOPE OF THE REPORT

The study topic is predefined in the Eurydice Network annual work programme. For this, “the A7 has read research reports and European official documents on the matter, as well as meeting with the thematic Unit of the Directorate-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, to whom proposals are submitted. The National Units have the opportunity to comment on the study topic in question. Needless to say, the scope of the study depends on the time expected for completion” (European Eurydice Unit analyst). The European Unit also attends to scheduled studies from other supranational organisations, such as the OECD.

“The feasibility of the information collected should be examined from the beginning. For example, information concerning national policies on teacher training and learning in higher education, is so limited that Eurydice needs to resort to other sources in order to collect the relevant information (and in some cases there is no such information) (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

“A7 draws up secondary analysis on relevant data collected through international surveys on students and teachers, such as PISA, IEA, TIMSS, TALIS... A7 doesn’t use the results of the students in these trials, but it does use the context questionnaires, which allow access to the actors’ insights and opinions on the practices” (European Eurydice Unit analyst)

This initial phase includes:

- drafting of the data collection tool (questionnaire)
- glossary of definitions (definitions of the most important or complex terms used in the study, which enable all National Units to interpret them in similar ways in the stage of data collection).

“Developing a data collection tool is always an important first step. The definitions should be shared and understood clearly by all countries, and questions should be well organised. A7 has long-term experience in the creation of questionnaires, applying existing terminology and definitions, as well as wide background knowledge of the key characteristics of the countries. The Eurydice Network has grown from 32 to 42 countries, consequently, the challenges the network is facing have increased due to the lack of previous experiences with the new countries, which have to learn the work process” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

Over time, the questionnaires have progressively been optimized, specially with respect to decentralised or deregulated countries. The format has been improved, with the mainstreaming of multiple choice responses followed by blank spaces for feedback, and with an easy method of cutting and pasting. Moreover, the logic of questions were given greater sense, care was taken on the political correctness of sensitive terms (“foreign language”), general terms were chosen

(“steering documents”, instead of “curriculum” or “syllabus”) and terms that could turn out to be ambiguous, such as “national”⁴, were disregarded.

Concerning IT tools used, analysts from the European Unit explain that questionnaires were previously designed in Word. But with the expansion of the Eurydice Network it became impossible to manually analyse all the information. This is why work is now carried out using Excel documents, which enable the creation of a database that mainstreams all the information from each questionnaire, and analyse each item of data or indicator on an individual Excel spreadsheet.

“We can mention on that regard, the joint data collection with the OECD for ‘Instruction time in full-time compulsory education’, which has been centralised through the generation of this type of database” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

At present, there are two challenges: the possibility of designing online surveys for information collection, which entails the previous authorisation of the software by the Directorate-General for Informatics (DIGIT), of the European Commission, and making the information of Eurydice increasingly accessible to any researcher who wants to consult it.

“The definition of analysis terms is fundamental. In this respect, it was of vital importance to agree with the European Unit on a definition of ‘top level authority’ which contemplates the particularity of countries with education systems more or less decentralised, among which Spain is included. Eurydice Spain-REDIE worked for a long time with analysts and the heads of Eurydice to establish a definition considering Spain’s particular situation, and to help readers to understand the data that appeared on this, in the European study. The definition finally agreed upon, and included in the glossary of the KDL⁵ which will be published shortly, is what is now being applied in all Eurydice analysis. The effort was worthwhile, taking into account the quality of the result and the contribution made by Eurydice Spain-REDIE, to progress towards the objective of this type of analysis: contribute to the in-depth understanding of the different situations of European education systems.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

In 2014 the European Unit introduced a new work tool known as **online briefing**, which enables the National Units to raise, in real time, any doubts that might appear in the initial stages of a study.

The initial stage is concluded with the preparation, by the European Unit, of a **work document with a conceptual framework of the study**, which includes:

- political context and information justifying the need for the study
- levels of education to be studied
- academic year of reference

⁴ Minutes from the Working Meeting on Methodology Brussels, 26 & 27 May 2011 (documento interno).

⁵ *Key Data on teaching languages at school in Europe*: a Eurydice Network study which is currently in the checking phase and will be published shortly

- main themes included within
- study methodology
- sources of information

Although it is voluntary, the analysts from the European Unit stress the importance of the active participation, in this first stage, of technical and external experts of the National Units, to clarify the terms included in the glossary, the scope and the methodology of the study, facilitating compliance with the delivery timeframe and achieving higher quality in the responses.

B) DRAFT REVISION OF THE DATA COLLECTION TOOL AND GLOSSARY

This second stage requires a revision, by the National Units, of the questionnaire draft and the definitions included in the glossary, both prepared by the European Unit. With regard to the data collection tool, it might be the adaptation of one used in a previous study, or of a new questionnaire.

The National Units must take into account in their review the following key issues:

- Are the questions reflected in the definition of the study scope? Are they clearly understood? Are the given response categories adequate?
- Are the definitions clear? Is it necessary to improve the definition of any of the terms?
- Is it feasible to respond to each question, especially in the case of countries with decentralised systems in education?
- Is the language clear? Is the questionnaire format easy to use?

“Once the draft of the questionnaire reaches my hands, I can see how the questions are formulated and if the tools for collecting the data (for example, the Excel spreadsheets), adjust to the Spanish case study in this field. For example, if a question is asked to which the answer from Spain is ‘No’, but I consider that in my country there could be something similar to what is being asked, I suggest the reformulation of the question, (in this case, I ask that the question be of a more general nature) so that from Spain, the situation can be described. Nevertheless, it is in the European Unit where the information we give is assessed and whether it is significant enough so as to amend the questionnaire” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

In some thematic studies, an overview is provided of the main results of the research on the topic of the study, the intention being that this literature helps to establish the context and to understand the logic of the questions formulated in the questionnaire. The European Union urges the National Units to send information on the relevant national studies, to contribute to the rigour at this stage.

The thematic studies, as well as the national fiches and databases or structural indicators of Eurydice, are addressed in the work meetings held at the European Unit headquarters, with the objective of discussing areas linked with the scope and data collection tools. Shortly after the mentioned meetings, and especially in the case of thematic studies, the draft of the questionnaire and support documents are sent to the National Units.

The involvement of the National Units in this phase is very important, since they have the opportunity to amend any questions after checking their relevance, to indicate if any major aspect has been excluded, or to anticipate any possible problems when completing the final questionnaire. Moreover, this revision gives them knowledge on what kind of information they are going to require, giving them a clearer view of the contents of the forthcoming study.

“The National Units are a key element in the preparation of the study. First, they receive the scoping note for its revision and then include their comments about the availability of data at national level concerning the intended topics of the study” (Eurydice European Unit)

“The fact that countries don’t count on measures or policies relating to some of the topics included in the study isn’t a problem, this is valuable information in itself. For instance, it’s very interesting to know if a country doesn’t possess a controlled system of support to teachers starting the profession because it yields this competence to the school autonomy” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

“The revision and possibility of amendment to the questionnaire represents an opportunity for including within it, aspects which are considered to be of relevance within the Spanish education system framework, so that they are collected in the analysis” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“Several years ago, the National Units claimed that they only analysed the questionnaire in its final phase so as not to bother their external experts in the drafting phase. This isn’t a good strategy because it’s the external expert who has to fill the questionnaire out, so it needs to be well understood. In addition, the external expert can, at this stage, provide interesting feedback which can be taken into account” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

“A7 finalises the design of the data collection instruments, taking into consideration any feedback from the National Units” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

C) DATA COLLECTION BY THE NATIONAL UNITS

This is the last phase in which the National Units can declare their non-participation in the study. If this isn’t done and the data is not provided, the National Unit is excluded thereof.

The National Units, their experts or all of them, collect the required information and fill the final questionnaire out, meeting the guidelines laid down by the European Unit on how to proceed.

“The information the National Units provide is mainly legislative and qualitative, derived from official documents such as; laws, decrees, regulations and recommendations” (Eurydice European Unit)

THE EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DATA COLLECTION OF THE STUDIES, NATIONAL FICHES AND STRUCTURAL INDICATORS

“The data collection phase is, undoubtedly, the most laborious and demanding, since the amount of work at the moment of processing is tremendous and implies, on many occasions, working under pressure to meet the deadlines. The other stages of the study don’t entail such dedication. In my opinion, greater time should be allocated to this stage, adjusting to the actual needed time of the other stages.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

“The data collection phase is very complex due to the great educational diversity present in our country because of the decentralisation. The amount of questions we can cogently answer reflecting a uniform situation is very scarce, which gives rise to the need for qualifying and justifying. How many regional education administrations should comply with a specific requirement so that we can answer ‘Yes, this happens in our country’ to a question? It’s an issue that we’ve thought about on occasions.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

- The role of the Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical experts

“My role is to coordinate the process of developing the study in question, especially in the collection of information. The expert and I lay out a work plan which keeps us in constant contact” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

“When a technical expert responds to the data collection in coordination with the external expert, he or she can foresee which questions or requirements from the A7 will be in the checking phase. This gives him or her time to keep up to date and gather information which will help to explain the meaning of any response. Fluent communication between the technical and the external expert can lead to resolving many issues” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)
- The process of searching for information needed to respond to the questionnaire

“The most important thing to know is, what is the exact information required in order to answer, in a clear and comprehensive way, each one of the questions from the questionnaire. One of the challenges is to seek and find the appropriate legislation, bearing in mind that in our country the regulations on education are not only enacted by the National State Administration, but educational competencies were transferred to the Autonomous Communities and many of the educational issues are regulated by them” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

“The challenge when searching for information, at state as well as regional level, is the accessibility to the said information. Finding the legislation at state level is much easier than at regional level, since the Autonomous Communities don’t always have all of the legislation or official documents available online” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“What we’re looking for is that all information relating to Spain be as specific as possible.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“If the information we need can be obtained from legislation because of it being a regulated aspect of the education system, the main obstacle consists in locating the law that rules what we are looking for. Sometimes this is straightforward. Other times, we have to dive deeply into the official gazettes and into the web pages belonging to the Departments of Education, until we find the legislation we are searching for.

In the case of databases, when statistical data is requested, the main difficulty is due to the data, on occasions, not being public. In such cases, it’s necessary to address a request to the Statistical Office asking for the necessary data.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“In order to develop all of the Eurydice and REDIE products, a great amount of information stemming from Autonomous Communities is consulted. This is mainly legislation, but it can also be news located in their educational portals, in newspapers

or from other institutions, such as the ombudsman (in the case of the aid report for the acquisition of text books) or syndicates. On occasions it is necessary for us to turn every stone, to locate some of the information.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“It would be important to take into account those tasks shared with the OECD. In such cases, coordination work is necessary which can sometimes slow down slightly the elaboration of the Spanish contribution” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

- Participation of the regional education administrations in the European data collection.

Eurydice Spain-REDIE considers invaluable that **the regional education administrations themselves report directly on their competency management**, and they are always invited to participate in the elaboration of the Spanish contribution which is sent to the Eurydice Network. This regional participation together with the MECD is carried out within the context of the Working Group for Educational Assessment and Information (GTEIE) (more information in the previous article of this same issue “Information and studies on education as an object of territorial cooperation I”).

“In Spain, time spent on data collection is too short because at least three trips have to be made: from Eurydice Spain-REDIE to the Autonomous Communities, and from these to the external experts that organise, elaborate and synthesise all the information provided. Likewise, this consolidated work returns to the Spanish Unit for in-depth revision and discussion. If there is something to amend, correct or delete, it is sent back to the external experts. This process is very slow, since the Autonomous Communities must have enough time to collect the information.” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

“When a questionnaire has to be sent to the Autonomous Communities for them to complete, the process takes much longer and becomes highly complex” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“Concerning thematic studies, in cases where the study questionnaire is sent to the Autonomous Communities for completion, the main obstacle is that we can get to handle as many as 18 questionnaires from many other education administrations, depending on the number of them that have decided to participate. This entails a great volume of information, which is sometimes difficult to organise and incorporate into a single response for Eurydice. There is also the case that the information they provide varies considerably, so, perhaps we should consider drawing up a ‘Guide for the participation in the Spanish contribution to the Eurydice Network through Eurydice Spain-REDIE’” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical and external experts)

The participation of the regional education administrations until present, has been articulated in the following ways, according to the circumstances and the time conceded by the European Unit to send the contribution to the study:

1. “In the updating of the KDL⁶, a decision was made to draw up a sub-questionnaire to be completed by the Autonomous Communities. For its preparation, the data collection that had already been made at the time of the elaboration of a study REDIE on the teaching of foreign languages in Spain, was taken into consideration. In doing so, the duplicating of requests for data was able to be minimised and, thus, promoting the participation of the more education administrations, the better. Accordingly, they were asked to take into account the Spanish study and to verify whether they had to update data or whether they could just consider the information they already had available. They were also requested to submit factual information required for this Eurydice study that wasn't present in the REDIE study. This process was carried out parallel to the data collection, based on the legislation in force, which allowed for the contrasting of information provided by the regional administrations and to use it for their enrichment by adding the individual aspects of the regional praxis. This process has brought about rigour to the process of information collection, along with the enhancing of information made available to the European Unit on the reality of the Spanish education system within its different areas of competence” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)
2. During the data collection for the latest European study on citizenship education, which will be published this same year, Eurydice Spain-REDIE and the responsible external experts had time to:
 - translate the questionnaire sent by the European Unit into Spanish
 - include information that had already been collected by the Unit, for its confirmation or correction by the education administrations
 - “translate” certain expressions from the questionnaire into others more related to the Spanish education system, with a view to enhancing its comprehensibility to the technical experts of the education administrations
3. In the data collection of the latest European study on the professional teaching career, which will be published in 2018, the Research Group on Supranational Education Policies-GIPES of the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM) and Eurydice Spain-REDIE decided to submit the European questionnaire, exactly how it was received in the Unit. This was owing to the lack of time for addressing it before forwarding it on to the Autonomous Communities, completing and sending it to the European Unit. The only assistance that could be offered to the education administrations, was to indicate in which of the 34 indicators their collaboration was essential, be it for updating the information appearing in previous studies; answering the questions added to the version prior to the indicator, so that its analysis is the most comprehensive; or to report on this for the first time, being a new indicator
4. In the data collection for the study on evidence-based decision-making recently published, the only thing we could do was to submit the questionnaire as it was received

⁶ *Key Data on teaching languages at school in Europe*: Eurydice Network study which is currently in the checking phase and will soon be published.

from the European Unit with an invitation to all the education administrations to participate.

In the light of the issue, it can be readily seen that Eurydice Spain-REDIE is more in line with some ways than with others. Yet, what there is in common in all cases is the intention of adapting to, for whatever circumstances, the European studies. It is the firm intention of Eurydice Spain-REDIE, that all education administrations have the information and the instrument for data collection submitted by the European Unit, and for the MECD to provide them with all the possible assistance, encouraging them to participate in the Spanish contribution to the Eurydice 'products'.

The data collection of the Autonomous Communities is also done indirectly, especially in the case of the 'national fiches' or 'structural indicators'. The sub-directorates of the MECD, who work closely⁷ with those from Eurydice Spain-REDIE, provide the Spanish Unit with information, enabling them to meet the requirements of the Eurydice Network. This information stems from the joint work the Autonomous Communities develop with the ministerial Units, yet it is the external expert who elaborates the Spanish contribution. Very carefully, and whenever possible, these Units support the process of revision and closure for Eurydice Spain-REDIE with the external expert, prior to the contribution being sent to the European Unit.

- Support from the European Unit and Eurydice Spain-REDIE to the work performed by the technical and external experts

"The expert and I establish a work plan which keeps us in constant contact and, at the same time, the director of the P4 is fully informed, in time and in due form, of all the developments of the work by means of clear communication with the external expert and myself. All agents involved in this work, including the A7, are always available and show their willingness to cooperate at all times" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

"Methodologically, they provide me with the information, as soon as it is available, from the European Unit, which makes work much easier, taking into consideration that the time for each one of the phases is extremely tight. After this point, we establish an internal date for the delivery of the documentation, bearing in mind the deadline set by Eurydice. We work in parallel, summing up every step of progress, every part, until we arrive at a final document. We jointly re-examine it, checking every detail until the final document is achieved which is then sent as the Spanish contribution to the European study.

Communication with Eurydice Spain-REDIE on the analysis in which I have been involved, has been entirely seamless at all times. They have the capacity to let us work with autonomy and at the same time accompany us throughout the process, enabling not only the resolution of doubts but also the search for information together, from start to finish. They are hard workers, as well as being empathic and very committed, and with whom work is made much easier despite the difficulties and time constraints expected while working on Eurydice analyses" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

⁷ More information in section 2.2 of this same article, "Collaborations with other Units and official organisations".

“The communication process is like a tennis match: the constant exchanging of drafts, with annotations from one to the other until the end result is achieved. The best means of communication for doing this would be face to face, but seeing that this isn’t possible we have to do it by telephone or by email (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“The communication process with the National Unit is very flexible and dynamic. When the documents arrive, we receive them and start work on them straight away. Communication is seamless with the National Units as well as with other Units of the MECD, from which we sometimes have to request information. Throughout the entire process, any queries or recommendations can be shared with Eurydice Spain-REDIE. Usually, queries are better dealt with by mail or by telephone, both are good means. At times, the telephone is better because it allows a further clarification and exposure of queries” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

Before submitting the questionnaire, the National Units must check that all sections have been answered and that the answers are understandable, comprehensive and relevant. Carrying out the appropriate corrections avoids the exchanging of e-mails and requests for additional information during the following phase.

D) FEEDBACK FROM THE EURYDICE EUROPEAN UNIT

Once the completed questionnaires have been received, the European Unit reads them and, if necessary, provides feedback to the Units when certain answers need to be explained in more detail, information not provided is required or, merely because a certain point has to be clarified. This phase, known as “*data cleaning*” helps the Units to successfully complete the entire questionnaire, as well as minimising the possible workload that could be engendered during the next phase, which is the revision of the study draft.

E) CHECKING PHASE OR DRAFT REVISION AND VERIFICATION

The objective of this phase is that each National Unit verifies that the given information included in the European study draft has been correctly reflected, organised and categorised by the European Unit’s analysts. Resolving the differences does not imply in any case a further contribution of data, since all of the required information has been previously provided.

After completing the revision of the full draft and the references to their countries in particular, the Units request corrections by means of a document designed for this purpose.

“What is more complicated is to find points in the report in which Spain should be mentioned, but it isn’t. My method generally starts by verifying that all mentions of Spain in the text, graphs and tables are correct. Once this has been done, the report has to be read meticulously to see if our education system would fit into any corresponding paragraph or section in which it has not been mentioned. For that purpose, all of our answers to the questionnaire have to be kept in mind, for without this, the verification would be very complicated to carry out.

On the other hand, we also tend to control, somehow or other, the number of times Spain is mentioned in concrete examples that are given in some parts of the report,

mainly when talking about issues in which Spain stands out for some reason. This happened in a study on ‘Tackling early leaving from education and training in Europe’, in which Spain was one of the few countries having a comprehensive national strategy, but was not mentioned in many examples, whilst other much smaller countries were mentioned continuously. We entered into a kind of contest and suggested various examples that could be included to increase the visibility of the vast amount of measures implemented in Spain. Some were included, others were not, but at least the number of mentions remained much more balanced” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“The difficulty isn’t in the paragraphs in which Spain is explicitly mentioned, but in those describing an overall situation, for example, ‘17 countries have a remuneration system linked to seniority...’. In such statements only the European Unit knows which countries they are; and in the case of Spain we considered us to be one of those 17 countries, but a mistake could have been made in the process and that there are actually 18 and not 17, or that as a result of the information provided, Brussels considers that a country does not fall within the category when it actually does... In these cases, we have to hope that no fault has occurred” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“The main difficulties come from requesting changes or corrections different to the data provided by the Unit in the data collection phase. Among the explanations given by the National Units are the detected errors in the submitted questionnaire, or when examining the text and the comparisons made, the situation has been better understood” (Eurydice European Unit analyst) “There are times when we include something in the data collection but then, according to what other countries answer, we consider that we should change the approach or give more information. This usually happens when we say that our country does not do X or Y, but then we see that other countries answer less restrictively, with examples that could be compared to things that our education administrations actually do. This is what leads us to consider expanding our response in order to include it” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“Delays in submitting questionnaires or new information at the end of the checking phase are two aspects that hinder the analyst’s task, inasmuch as they entail the adapting of the text before publication” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

The European Unit sends only the strictly necessary questions or recommendations to the National Units, bearing in mind that in the feedback phase the identified deficiencies have already been addressed.

“In the case of having to ‘balance’ or reduce the amount of information provided by the countries, the European Unit usually gives indications and we evaluate which information is more important and which is not. The situation also arises where, in the event of having to reduce information, Brussels performs this process and we, in the study revision phase, tell them whether Spain’s situation is well reflected in the information or if there is a need to add more (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

This is the only checking phase during the whole production process of the product, therefore, the quality of feedback received from the National Units is crucial in order to successfully conclude the study.

“In the checking phase questionnaire, there is enough space to request justified changes, provided that they are motivated changes and are explained correctly. Another thing is whether the European Unit accepts them. If this is no to be, they always give a reason and convincing explanation” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

“Changes should be proposed in the checking phase. With that in mind, I perform a really exhaustive revision of the information so that I don’t have to propose changes in the final quick reading. I feel that enough opportunities are given to call for changes (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“The professionalism and experience of the analysts of the European Eurydice Unit makes ‘negotiating’ changes in the analysis drafts not such a difficult task. The good argumentation of the changes required by Eurydice Spain-REDIE, based on the overall interest of the analysis and in providing a better insight into the reality of the Spanish education system, is fundamental. Eurydice accepts, without a problem, the required changes referring to errors in the processing of the data; related to the nuances in the drafting of the analysis or in the information shown in graphs and tables. This would emphasise the professionalism of the analysts, who accept the incorporation of the changes if they consider them to provide a better understanding of the reality of the country and make the National Unit ‘feel more comfortable’, taking into consideration, of course, the overall picture of Europe. It is in Brussels where it is best seen if the information needed to incorporate into the draft exceeds the degree of detail required and, as a result, would situate one country above another in the analysis. The National Units fully understand this..., although, at times it is emphasised. In this respect, there is flexibility as much in the ‘national vision’ as in the ‘European vision’, by both parties, which facilitates the process” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

“There are occasions in which we might well think that A7 hasn’t managed to entirely express the information we have submitted. It is like being under the impression that the essence of our country isn’t being reflected, regarding the subject under study. It is at such moments when we request them to change or redraft certain information, or we even reach a decision on providing new information if we believe that by doing so it will be more realistic or relevant. Normally, our requests are taken into consideration, not least the fact that A7 has to deal with information coming from 42 different National Units, each one of them with their own idiosyncrasy and educational specificity” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

- Country notes which appear in the European study draft or which the National Units request
“Another challenge is the request for lengthy notes accompanying the information from a country. In this case, we attend to predefined criteria: direct information connected with the data, it should help to give a better understanding of this and correct interpretation, not to provide additional nor unrelated information to it, be brief, etc...” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

“The recent trend is to add fewer specific country notes, which on the one hand makes reading easier, but on the other, causes the loss of some national details” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

F) FINAL QUICK READING

After the checking phase and the inclusion of feedback and proposed changes within it, the National Units receive the almost finalised text for a final quick reading. On occasions, this phase is difficult for them because they might come across significant changes with regards to the draft they checked in the previous phase. If some of the changes were not able to be considered, the European Unit explains why.

In this phase only data that is erroneous or meaningful can be corrected, as well as drafting issues. Under no circumstances is it possible to include new information.

“The quality of the final product is very important, so the final quick reading of the almost finished version of the study, assures the quality and accuracy of the information offered. It’s important not to confuse this phase with a second checking phase” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

G) STUDY COMPLETION, NATIONAL FICHES OR STRUCTURAL INDICATORS: TRANSLATION IF NECESSARY, INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND PUBLICATION IN THE EURYDICE AND EURYDICE SPAIN-REDIE WEB PAGES

Once the final version of the study is obtained, it is published in English in the Eurydice Network and Eurydice Spain-REDIE web pages. After its publication, no changes are possible. The National Units that consider it appropriate can also publish a translation of the study in their language. Eurydice Spain-REDIE produces and publishes on a yearly basis all scheduled translations by the European Unit.

The same happens with descriptions of national education systems. Eurydice Spain-REDIE publishes theirs in Spanish and English.

“The main Eurydice tools that help us with translation are the *Style Guide* and the *Interinstitutional Style Guide* of the European Union Publications Office”. “One of the difficulties we have is the translation of our country’s specific terms into English. The reverse case is also complicated at times, that is to say, when I translate into Spanish, I often need to read the descriptions on certain specific aspects within a country’s national education system to understand more clearly what a term or some particular issue refers to exactly” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE External Translator Expert)

“At the end of the production, the European Unit organises an internal assessment to examine the difficulties found, if there were to be any. The National Units are also invited to complete the assessment questionnaire prepared for this purpose” (Eurydice European Unit analyst)

3.2.1. EURYDICE AND REDIE THEMATIC STUDIES

In 2016, Eurydice Spain-REDIE changed its work model with the Autonomous Communities within the framework of the Working Group for Education Evaluation and Information of the MECD: from “searching for information on the Autonomous Communities” to “the Autonomous Communities jointly report to the MECD through the Eurydice Spain-REDIE Unit: they report to those responsible for education management in Spain”.

This change is being reinforced step by step, but it's not easy, as can be deduced from the above mentioned, and it's a long awaited demand expressed by the Eurydice European Unit and a “cherished wish” throughout time from Eurydice Spain-REDIE after the transfer of educational competencies to the Autonomous Communities was finalised in 2000.

In this change of model, which particularly affects the REDIE studies and the development of the Spanish contribution to the Eurydice studies, the participation of each one could be defined as follows:

The European Unit (Eurydice studies), the National Units consulted:

the formulation of the study scope; development of the instrument for data collection; drafting of the European progress report and checking phase; drafting of the final European report and final quick reading; publication of the European study by the European Commission.

The Eurydice Spain-REDIE Unit (Eurydice and Redie studies):

the formulation or revision of the scope; data collection (collaboration in the development of the instrument, or the revision and translation of the European questionnaire, and the submitting to the Autonomous Communities); revision of the draft of the Spanish progress report and checking phase with the Autonomous Communities; revision of the draft of the final Spanish report and final quick reading; and publication in the MECD and translation to Spanish.

“We should know exactly what information to look for. Once this is perfectly clear, we have to prepare a relevant questionnaire to obtain data collection from the autonomic administrations. The challenge is to design an easy-to-read questionnaire, with clear and concise questions. Our target is to achieve maximum participation from the Autonomous Communities, so that all the information is recorded in the REDIE study in question” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

The external experts (Eurydice and Redie studies):

revision of the scope; data collection (development of the instrument, or revision and translation of the European questionnaire); drafting of the Spanish progress report and checking phase with the Autonomous Communities through Eurydice Spain-REDIE; drafting of the final Spanish report and final quick reading with Eurydice Spain-REDIE.

“One of the main difficulties when designing a questionnaire allowing data to be collected from the Autonomous Communities is the great diversity that exists regarding the regulation of the different aspects of the education system. This diversity entails the designing of quite extensive questionnaires to collect information from all possible situations. To design an appropriate questionnaire, we need to have a lot of knowledge on how the object of study is organised and in general, education

in the regional education administrations, and that requires a lot of previous work” (Eurydice Spain-REDIE external expert)

The external experts prepare the contents and write the Spanish study or the Spanish contribution to the European study; they mainstream the information sent by the Autonomous Communities; they revise the draft of the European report (Eurydice) or attend to the corrections or recommendations from the Autonomous Communities which examine the Spanish study report (REDIE).

In accordance with their work, the external experts are able to identify “necessary information areas from the Autonomous Communities” and will earnestly request this information from them. These are sections where the elaboration virtually depends on information given by the Autonomous Communities.

The regional education administrations (Eurydice and Redie studies):

data collection (submitting information by means of the Spanish or European questionnaire); checking phase of the Spanish or European progress report, and if so wished, give feedback or make corrections to this.

4. ACTIVITIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE ‘EURYDICE PRODUCTS’

“The Eurydice Network invites the National Units to promote Eurydice products at national level. In the future they will be involved in the production and implementation of a promotional plan geared towards each one of the publications” (Eurydice European Unit)

“Even though the Eurydice and Eurydice Spain-REDIE’s trajectories continue to demonstrate that they master the production of comparative analyses, reports and synthesis on priority educational themes; that the quality of their products continues to improve; and that they are capable of adapting to the different political and institutional contexts occurring in Europe and Spain, if those responsible for education systems and policies don’t consider their information necessary in the decision-making processes, or they don’t have enough knowledge on them to know about what to inform on, then the effort and work carried out won’t have a purpose.

A similar situation applies to the educational community and the general public. The European and Spanish information networks give the opportunity to consider education systems in earnest from evidence-based information, leaving aside, bit by bit, political discussions based more on emotions and beliefs than on tangible criteria (More information: “Education systems in a world of post-truths”. Retrieved from <http://blog.educalab.es/cniie/2017/05/03/sistemas-educativos-en-un-mundo-de-post-verdades/>).

‘The unknown is not needed’, so, that Eurydice and Eurydice Spain-REDIE perform their functions depends if their work is known about and the type of information offered through the different products. And that depends on the European and Spanish Units, on the promotion and dissemination activities they perform, which are never few.

If it isn't read... for what reason do we write, for who? What purpose has the work we do?" (Eurydice Spain-REDIE technical expert)

Since September 2016, Eurydice Spain-REDIE has placed particular emphasis on the promotion of Eurydice and REDIE products. At this moment, and on an ongoing basis, the following dissemination plan is being implemented:

1. daily, the diffusion on Twitter of all Eurydice and Eurydice Spain-REDIE products, with the hashtags #EurydiceEU or #EurydiceREDIE
2. weekly, the writing and publication of a post on the CNIIE blog
3. periodically, when assigned, the drafting of the CNIIE's Education Bulletin
4. yearly, preparation and publishing of articles related to the current Spanish education "view" from Eurydice Network's products
5. mailing list for all Eurydice and REDIE publications. More than 5000 recipients, and growing continuously
6. permanent updating of the Eurydice Spain-REDIE web page, in which all of the published Eurydice and REDIE products can be found. This web page is more than a browser, it's a source of information on European priorities and the Spanish education system based on the management carried out by all educational administrations in their area of competence (More information: "Eurydice Spain-REDIE presents its new web portal". Retrieved from <http://blog.educalab.es/cniie/2015/05/12/eurydice-espana-redie-presenta-su-nuevo-portal-web/>).

"Work performed in Eurydice is doubly interesting, not only because of the great amount of information handled and the way of relating, associating and comparing all of the data, but because of the incredible organisation of the timetables, work tools and the availability of the platforms (web pages, online bibliography, work meetings with the European Unit), which fully optimises the analysts, technical and external experts' work (Eurydice Spain-REDIE)

"The Eurydice Network has played an important role in the cooperation and development of education at European level, for 37 years. Its capacity for supporting the formulation of evidence-based policies is exceptional thanks to country coverage and to the quality of the information. The Network provides studies taking stock in critical areas of policy, and assuring that the educational community is informed of the status quo in terms of policies and current educational structures. In this manner, it contributes to the debate with solid evidence on policy initiatives and actions to be undertaken at European and national level" (Eurydice European Unit)

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In July 2011, he was appointed General Director of Educational Planning and Innovation for the Cantabrian Government's Department of Education, Culture and Sport. He held this position until July 2015, when he was appointed General Director of Territorial Assessment and Cooperation in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, a position which he currently holds.

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